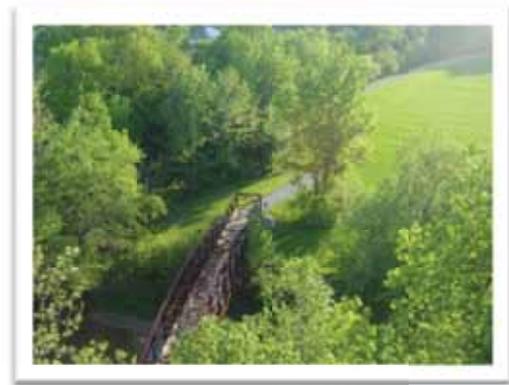


TRAIL ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT

Conclusion

The adoption of this 2013 P&R Master Plan by the City Council also includes the adoption of the 2013 Trails Plan. Having an approved Trails Plan provides city planners and local developers with the information they need when platting a new neighborhood or commercial project. An approved Trails Plan enables the Parks and Recreation Department to request a trail easement be donated or set aside when the City's concept review stage is reached. It also helps planners and developers to use planned future trails to attract buyers for their development.



Hinkson Creek Trail

Because acquiring land and/or trail easements is less expensive and less intrusive before property is developed, a proactive approach is needed to acquire the land and/or trail easements needed for future trail development. The Department should focus on obtaining key parcels in the primary targets, while paying attention to opportunities that may become available for secondary and tertiary targets.



MKT Trail

Also of note is the multi-agency partnership planning effort the City of Columbia is currently engaged in to develop an open space/green infrastructure plan for Columbia and Boone County. In 2012, the City executed a contract with Greenbelt Land Trust for Mid-Missouri for the development of this plan to be known as "Our Natural Legacy." This planning effort is in support of Goal 5.2 of the City's Vision Plan that states, "Land will be preserved throughout Columbia and Boone County to protect farmland, scenic views, natural topographies, rural atmosphere, watersheds, healthy streams, natural areas, native species, and unique environmentally sensitive areas." Identified strategies under this goal include the need to evaluate land preservation areas in Columbia and Boone County and to develop funding mechanisms to finance land preservation. It should be noted that the results of these efforts could impact future trail planning.

Once the trail projects are selected for the last round of GetAbout federal funding, all remaining proposed trail projects will have an "unfunded" status. Whether or not Columbia will be able to preserve land for future trails or construct any of the unfunded proposed trails will most likely depend on the voters' approval of the extension of the 1/8-cent Park Sales Tax used for land acquisition and capital improvement projects. This portion of the Park Sales Tax is set to expire

March 31, 2016. It is anticipated that the extension will be put on a ballot in 2015, pending City Council approval.

Trails are indeed a valued resource in this community. Good trail planning and development can truly enhance the quality of life in Columbia. As stated on the American Trails website:

“There are many benefits of trails and greenways that planners, funders, and the public need to know about: they make our communities more liveable; improve the economy through tourism and civic improvement; preserve and restore open space; and provide opportunities for physical activity to improve fitness and mental health.”



Bear Creek Trail at Garth Nature Area

Local surveys reveal that the majority of Columbia citizens use the trails, and trails rank as the most important Parks and Recreation facility for Columbia households. Columbia’s trail connection to the state Katy Trail is an avenue to attract visitors to Columbia from across the state. And, as Columbia’s trail system continues to develop, it has the potential to draw even more events and become a visitor attraction that can generate tourism dollars for the community. With an approved Trails Plan in place, Columbia is poised to fulfill the Community Visioning goals set for trails and greenways as expressed below.

Imagine Columbia’s Future - Trails Goal

“An extensive, safe network of trails will accommodate a variety of users ranging from recreational to nonmotorized travelers. This network may include roadway and public transportation infrastructure to connect parks, neighborhoods, schools and businesses.”

Imagine Columbia’s Future - Greenways Goal

“An extensive network of greenways will play a significant role in providing transportation options, protecting wildlife corridors, watersheds, and floodplains, and increasing public access to natural and open spaces.”